

Hello. My name is Laura Blake. I work for Thunder Basin Coal. My husband does as well. We've had the privilege of living in Wyoming for nine years, and we're in the process of raising our two beautiful girls. I'd like to say that without coal, our livelihood and our quality of life would not be possible. We have every reason to thank the coal companies for what we have today. We, like thousands of other young families in the Powder River Basin, are working to give our children a better future and a better opportunity, better than what we had when we were growing up, which is made possible by coal. Few other incomes in Wyoming or in other states are comparable to what the coal mines offer in terms of wages, benefits, and quality of life. In short, the income from coal is virtually irreplaceable. Announcing to review our royalty rates is a facade to the real intent of these changes. It is a political ploy to force the Administration's ideological agenda for climate change on a public resource. Coal also plays a major role in the money generated for the federal government. The public does benefit from the programs, services, and facilities that coal has continued to pay for. The question is is the public getting fair market value for the public resource for federal money generated from coal. In my opinion, the answer is absolutely not. While I believe the mines and the mine companies pay enough already, we should also be asking the question that is really key to this issue. Is the federal government using this money from development of a public resource, are they using this money in the best possible way? Money from federal coal should be allocated to clean coal research to further advance the use of one of the most abundant, lowest cost and most reliable fuels in the world. It should not be used to pick winners and losers in the energy sector by subsidizing unsustainable alternative energy that is more expensive and less reliable. It should not be used to impose onerous new regulations aimed at killing coal at any cost. Keeping existing royalty rates is enough. The federal government should be using these funds in the more responsible way to benefit its citizens, not take our high-paying jobs right out from under our feet.